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DE RUEHML #0748 0670501
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 080501Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5568
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 000748

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECIN](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: ENGAGING ASEAN: RECONSIDERING THE TREATY OF AMITY
AND COOPERATION

REF: A. MANILA 499

[1B.](#) MANILA 408

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, reason 1.4 (d)

[¶11.](#) (C) President Arroyo and Foreign Secretary Romulo, as Chair of ASEAN, have requested that the U.S. accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). They note that most of ASEAN's other partners have signed the treaty, that the treaty is largely a generic expression of principles, and that a U.S. signature during this 30th year anniversary of U.S.-ASEAN ties would highlight the growing U.S.-ASEAN relationship. The Philippines wants, as Secretary Romulo put it in his February 13 letter to the Secretary (ref a), "deeper U.S. engagement in our emerging regional architecture." President Arroyo, who raised the issue with President Bush at APEC last November, sees U.S. accession to the treaty as a way to open the door wider to a greater U.S. regional role.

[¶12.](#) (C) A U.S. expression of interest in signing the treaty would reflect our recognition of the growing maturity of ASEAN and its increasing focus on counterterrorism and regional security, including on issues important to us like Burma and North Korea, which the Philippines has championed. By contrast, what appears here as our continued unwillingness to support the treaty strikes many in the Philippines (and we suspect elsewhere in the region) as a sign that the U.S. is not as engaged in the region as China and other key ASEAN partners. President Arroyo and Philippine officials understand that the U.S. would likely express certain reservations about the treaty, as did the Australians, and that the U.S. President would not attend the East Asia Summit as an outcome of signing (although we might well want to have a more senior presence than in the past - ref b).

[¶13.](#) (C) Meanwhile, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs just confirmed to us that the EU is expected formally to declare its intention to accede to the treaty at an EU/ASEAN meeting in Nuremberg March 14-15 (formal EU accession will have to await an amendment to the treaty, which currently permits accession only by sovereign states, not organizations).

[¶14.](#) (C) Action request: Embassy believes that signing the treaty during this 30th anniversary year of U.S.-ASEAN relations would bring considerable public diplomacy gains here in the Philippines and in the region, while underscoring to our partners serious U.S. intent to ratchet up our regional role. We would cement, in their minds, our interest in the region at a time when China, the EU, and others are seeking a wider role. A thoughtful, encouraging response to Secretary Romulo would also align well with Philippine

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successes against terrorism here. An announcement at the

ASEAN Regional Forum of a U.S. intent to sign the treaty by the Secretary, if she is able to attend, would be an excellent way to underscore U.S. engagement in the region.

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KENNEY